

**APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR  
PROTECTING A COMPUTER SYSTEM**

**ABSTRACT**

There is disclosed an apparatus and method for protecting  
5 a computer system by providing an improved password to prevent  
unauthorized access to the computer system. The apparatus of  
the present invention generally comprises a password controller  
capable of comparing a received password attempt with a stored  
password. The stored password of the present invention comprises  
10 a time envelope that comprises at least one password segment  
comprising: 1) an entry event; 2) a predetermined time interval  
following the entry event; and 3) a terminating signal to mark  
the end of the password segment. Access to the computer system  
is authorized when password segments of a password attempt match  
15 the corresponding password segments of the stored password.  
The stored password of the present invention generally comprises  
groups of computer readable characters separated by time  
intervals of variable length. A time delay is added to each  
response to a password attempt in order to conceal the length of  
20 the time intervals within the stored password.